

## **COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA**

### **Wilderness Working Group Meeting Minutes**

**June 4, 2002**

Attendees:

Doralyn Genova	Terry Gray	Neal McKinstry
Warren Gore	Bill Hamman	Jane Ross
Gene Arnesen	Kris Hjelle	Bill Schapley
Belle Chesnick	Celeste Marsh	Bob Sherrill
		Harold Snyder

#### **Greetings and Introductions**

Bill Schapley opened the meeting and then handed out the agenda. The next meeting is scheduled for June 18, but the location has not yet been determined, although it will probably be at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office. Bill asked if anyone had any additional agenda items.

#### **Working Group Discussions**

Bill provided the group with his draft recommendation, which included the closure issue that the Working Group had previously reached consensus on.

The group talked about the BS road gate at Jones Canyon Trailhead. At issue is the current location and whether the group will recommend moving the trailhead closer to Jones Canyon; currently, the first three miles of the hike are through flat grazing range. Kris Hjelle had gone out and looked at the area, and provided a synopsis of her hike.

Warren Gore felt that moving the gate would only create bigger problems, and group discussions continued on this topic. Jane Ross, Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Planning Team Leader, stated that she thought Kris appeared to be the only group member with this particular concern. Kris went on to say that she thought she had found another trail that dropped down, providing shorter access to Jones Canyon. Bill spoke for the group, saying as a whole, the group wanted the gate to remain in the current location but recommended that BLM pursue an alternate trail from the gate/Jones Canyon Trailhead, if adequate resources are available.

Some discussion ensued about creating another cherry-stem road. Bill asked Warren to draft a recommendation on the Jones Canyon gate closure issue for the next meeting. Kris mentioned that she felt that a shortcut would eventually lead to dispersed hiking trails.

The Working Group asked the BLM to do some research on the Mee Canyon Trailhead. Bill reported that some BLM staff had told him that “administrative adjustments” had been made in the past to Wilderness boundaries. It was asked whether BLM had come up with any precedents on moving Wilderness boundaries, and Harold Snyder thought changes were made in order to correct initial mistakes. Jane proposed that it might have been more of a political decision. Jane added that the BLM has previously done some administrative adjustments in designating cherry-stems on the Flat Tops and at Black Rock/High Rock.

Warren thought that the group could make some phone calls to our congressmen and start pursuing the administrative adjustment. Warren felt that the congressmen’s staff were receptive to revising the Wilderness boundary. Someone suggested the boundary go along the existing allotment fence, which is within the current Wilderness boundary. Bill would like to see this drawn on a map, and BLM will have this map available for the next meeting. Jane thought it would take three maps to adequately reflect the proposed boundary revision. Someone asked how much the proposed realignment would reduce the Wilderness area’s size, and following Warren’s suggestion of following the allotment fence, it would only be a few acres, mostly impacting the chained area.

Warren suggested wrapping up all BS road issues, which would make it easier for him to write the draft recommendation.

The group discussed the Aubert private-land parcel, horse-trailer parking, and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on other spur roads. There is a need to address spur roads because of the resource damage they cause.

The group addressed mountain biking in the area, and someone stated there is not much use yet by that user group. Jane advised the group that they can designate trails for motorized use versus mechanized use—the group does have some choices about how these activities are addressed. The group has the option to close access to land to the south of the Wilderness, but Bill did not favor this. Warren stated that people get on cow trails and just go.

Bill’s write-up on the Gore private parcel reads, “Closed to public mechanized access.” The group is pondering whether it should be rewritten, stipulating motorized as well. Bill does not want to deny people access to their public lands south of the road. Playing the devil’s advocate, Bill suggested trying to shut off access for this hunting season and see what happens. Warren related that he had to close an area for rehabilitation across from the “cave.” People knew they were trespassing, but there was a large horse camp at the cave during hunting season. Only a few people use the area, and once they saw the sign, closing it was no problem. The group reached consensus in that no motorized

or mechanized travel will be allowed, and Warren will draft this recommendation. Bill agreed to rewrite his recommendation to include “motorized/mechanized.”

The Working Group then turned to the issue of dispersed camping. The group wondered how to manage for a “limited amount of dispersed camping,” when people are camping all along Sieber Canyon ridge. The BLM could impose both camping and access restrictions at such time impacts become too severe. The group agreed that the first thing to do would be to close spur roads, since this is where dispersed camping occurs. According to Terry, most of the dispersed camping occurs along BS road, from Knowles Canyon down to Jones Canyon. By closing some spur roads, some prime dispersed camping sites would be closed. Warren said most of the spur roads are old double-track ranch roads. Jane stated that the group will need a way to handle this given future concerns with dispersed camping.

There was some discussion about the number of gates along the road. Bill Schapley said that Warren is talking about gates from the NCA boundary to the Knowles Canyon Trailhead. It was asked whether the area could be signed, and if this would be another adaptive management issue. Jane responded that a pressure outlet is needed for this area. Harold feels there is no sense in trying to restrict use and used the July 4 holiday as an example. It was emphasized that the plan can be designed to limit use at such times as popular summer holidays. A group member suggested using a ¼-mile limit to spur road access, as a way to restrict use. Warren indicated that spur roads exist north as well. Jane likes the ¼-mile proposal and will discuss this with Troy Schnurr, the NCA Recreation Ranger, as there may be some enforcement issues. Jane will report back on this item.

Jane feels that toilet facilities will be necessary in the BS road area sometime in the future, and this has not yet been adequately addressed.

Warren will draft the Working Group’s position on BS road issues, hopefully before the next meeting.

Bill summarized what has been covered and asked that a group member draft a summary document on the Pollock and Devils Canyons’ Trailhead issues. These issues will be on the next meeting’s agenda. The City of Fruita (Dusty Dunbar) expressed interest in this as well.

The Rattlesnake Arches Trailhead was the last discussion item on the agenda, and Jane felt the group should talk about the hunter access road, along with the seasonal closures of the upper and lower roads. If the group is happy with status quo, then no further discussion is needed. For the Ruby Canyon/ Black Ridge plan, Harley Metz, BLM Ecologist, developed nine alternatives for addressing this issue. Someone asked why two roads go to the same place, and Warren provided the background on this. Bill Schapley wondered why Jane brought this issue up again, and Jane responded that the BLM might be interested in revisiting the issue. There is no access to the Mee Canyon Trailhead when the road is closed, and Warren thought this was Troy’s concern. The

group will talk about this issue at the next meeting. The BLM may have a problem with the group's solution, since there is still an issue with inadequate parking.

The group was informed that the Rattlesnake Canyon area would be discussed in depth at the next meeting, and they were asked to read their copy of the *Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated Resource Management Plan* in preparation for those discussions.

The meeting was adjourned.